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# **The role of change- and stability-oriented place attachment in rural community resilience: a case study in south-west Scotland**

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## ABSTRACT

Although recent research into resilience acknowledges the importance of attachment to place and claims that place is often the basis for community development, this relationship has not yet been explored in great detail. We research the link between people, place, and community resilience by examining and unravelling the role of place attachment in rural communities. We address the gap in current research by conducting interviews and eliciting mental maps from residents in two remote rural villages in Scotland.

The relationship between people and place can be explained by heterogeneity in a community, and this is influenced by the different aspects of place attachment: social, personal, and environmental. We therefore introduce two types of place attachment: *change-oriented* and *stability-oriented*. Both types of place attachment influence individual and community resilience.

Resilience and change-oriented place attachment can be restored after a disturbance and both are able to adapt to change. Stability-oriented place attachment, in contrast, can result in nostalgia and fear of loss or change of existing place aspects. However, this inclination towards protective behaviour can also enhance community resilience.

Long-term residents and in-migrants each have different types of place attachment, and each can strengthen or weaken community resilience. Long-term residents are more likely to have nostalgic feelings which result in stability-oriented attachment, making them less able to adapt to change. We argue that length of residence is not a factor in resilience building as such, and therefore this paper makes an original contribution to the debate on resilience.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, rural places have been characterized by strong internal community ties. For many scholars this has often been related to residents living in one place for long periods (Hay, 1998; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974), and working and living in the same place (Altman and Low, 1992). However, since the 1970s, many rural areas in Western Europe have faced challenges related to modernization of transport and communication, and the shift from production to consumption areas, resulting in youth out-migration and counter-urbanization (European Commission, 2013; Stockdale and MacLeod, 2013). These factors have brought important social challenges to rural communities (Woods, 2005) because they have altered the dynamics of community life. People now choose their place of residence more explicitly than they did in the past (Savage et al., 2005). For many people, the rural offers an attractive residential place, what Cloke (2006) describes as 'rural idyll'. Skerratt et al. (2012) observed this change in Scotland, with an increasing number of in-migrants and greater cultural diversity in rural areas.

Parallel to these processes is the transition from welfare states to enabling states (Elvidge, 2014), in which the government takes a new role as facilitator and enabler, rather than provider and manager. As part of this transition, communities have become more responsible for their own affairs with increased voluntary and community activity. In the United Kingdom, Elvidge (2014) argues that the role of the enabling state consists in empowering and supporting communities, individuals, and families to play more active role in improving their own wellbeing, signaling a shift from being dependent on the state to being more self-reliant.

Within the UK and Scotland this movement is evident in public policies seeking to strengthen community resilience and foster community-led development through community empowerment, participatory democracy and asset-ownership (Cabinet Office, 2011; Scottish Government, 2010; 2014). A significant recent development is the Community Empowerment Act Scotland (2015) (Scottish Parliament, 2015) which reflects the Scottish Government's desire for more empowered and resilient communities. The Act provides the legislative framework to facilitate a move towards greater community ownership and the associated benefits this can bring in terms of community cohesion and resilience.

Despite the positive and aspirational policy environment that identifies the need to develop community resilience, policies often do not reflect community priorities, nor work to understand issues of community resilience (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013). Current policies imply a high level of readiness across communities and that community resilience can simply happen regardless of social, economic, environmental and historical background of communities.' Attempts therefore to 'improve' upon existing structures may be actioned without taking into account what matters to local people. Policies should recognize that sustainability of communities requires tailored interventions to fit the particular needs of communities on the ground (Steiner and Markantoni, 2014).

In relation to these challenges, policymakers, practitioners and social scientists agree that community participation is key for creating resilient and vibrant communities (Skerratt, 2013; Steiner and Markantoni, 2014). Several scholars (Norris et al., 2008; McManus et al., 2011; Hegney et al., 2007) have analysed place in their discussion of individual resilience, but research has not yet analysed the link between people, place, and community resilience. This paper addresses this gap in research and aims to unravel the role of *change-oriented* and *stability-oriented* place attachment in the resilience of rural communities.

The paper starts with the theoretical background of place attachment and rural resilience, and shows how attachment to place is related to resilience. The study context is then presented and the research method explained. The results are discussed based on data

from two villages in rural Scotland. Finally, we suggest a framework for understanding people-place relationships as a building block for resilient communities.

## **PLACE ATTACHMENT**

### **Change- and stability-oriented place attachment**

Research has long tried to define place attachment and the complex relationship between people and their environment (Relph, 1976; Altman and Low, 1992). Place attachment can be defined, in short, as the emotional bond to a particular geographic space (Perkins et al., 2002). Place attachment is paradoxical, as ‘place attachments lead us to stay and protect what we cherish most in our communities and to invest time, energy, and money to improve that with which we are dissatisfied’ (Perkins et al., 2002, p. 41). In accord with this idea, we suggest that place attachment can be described in terms of change-oriented and stability-oriented place attachment. While the former aims for improvement and adapts to external changes, the latter can result in protective behaviour, nostalgia, and fear of loss or change of existing place aspects.

Gustafson’s model (2001) on meanings of place divides place into self, other, and environment, showing that social and natural environment are essential to the construction of a personalized attachment to place. Raymond et al. (2010) extended Gustafson’s concept of self to comprise the whole personal context by including rootedness, place identity, and place dependency. Based on this model, this article uses the three aspects of place attachment: (i) social; (ii) personal and (iii) environmental.

Change- and stability-oriented attachments can occur in all three aspects of place attachment, which overlap with community resilience. By examining the aspects of place attachment with resilience, we can unpack the role that change- and stability-oriented place attachment plays in rural community resilience.

### **Three aspects of place attachment**

#### *Social*

Community attachment was first researched by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974), who found that length of residence positively influences level of community participation. Residential place attachment often transforms into feelings of community pride, which can also contribute to the formation and maintenance of a group or culture (Twigger-Ross and Uzzel, 1996; Altman and Low, 1992). Norris et al. (2008, p. 139) explicitly link this to resilience: ‘Place attachment often underlies citizens’ efforts to revitalize a community and thus may be essential for community resilience.’ According to this, a sense of community and place attachment can both be regarded as attributes of resilience.

#### *Personal*

According to Raymond et al. (2010), the personal aspect of place attachment includes rootedness, place dependency, and place identity. Migration to the countryside is mostly based on quality of life concerns (Brehm et al., 2004). For new residents, place dependency is mostly based on emotional and spiritual factors, rather than services and economic factors such as job opportunities.

The relationship between community participation and place attachment is created partly through interest in place history or ‘roots’. Interest in village history can strengthen neighbourhood ties and interpersonal relationships in the community (Lewicka, 2005), and can help local residents (in-migrants and long-term residents) strengthen their attachment to

place. This can in turn help increase place identity and community resilience (Twigger-Ross and Uzzel, 1996; Brown et al., 2003; Manzo and Perkins, 2006).

The effect of length of residence on place attachment has been a matter of debate. Some scholars state that only those who have been raised in a place or whose family has lived there for many generations can develop a true sense of place (Hay, 1998), whereas for others, place attachment can develop independent of length of residence (Brown and Raymond, 2007; Lewicka, 2011). Savage et al. (2005) even suggest that newcomers can have a stronger attachment, because they may have made a more deliberate choice to live there. Lewicka (2011, p. 215) adds that newcomers' place attachment 'may have a different quality' from the attachment of long-term residents. For example, Brehm et al. (2004) found that length of stay has a positive impact mainly on social place attachment, rather than the environmental aspects of place, such as nature and landscape.

### *Environment*

Place attachment can also contribute to sustainable and ecological behaviour, which can be beneficial to both the individual and the community (Lewicka, 2005). Place attachment affects actions for improvement (change-oriented) or it affects willingness to engage in place-protective behaviour (stability-oriented). This willingness to engage is strong for environmental place attachment. People who value a place for its environmental assets are more willing to fight to maintain its natural wealth (Stedman, 2002; Devine-Wright and Howes, 2010). In-migrants sometimes move to rural communities specifically for the rich natural environment (Bijker and Haartsen, 2012) and may even appreciate this more than long-term residents (Savage et al., 2005). The common environmental interests of residents could potentially bridge the differences between in-migrants and long-term residents, and could serve as a common ground for community initiatives and community participation (Brehm et al., 2004), leading to change-oriented community resilience. As place attachment is often regarded as an attribute of resilience (Norris et al., 2008), we expand below on their overlapping relationship.

## **RURAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

The originally ecological concept of resilience (Holling, 1973) was first used for the social aspects of human life by Adger in 2000. Since then, the term has received interest from a variety of research perspectives (Cutter et al., 2008). We define rural community resilience as the ability of a group to cope with external threats and adjust to changes while balancing its (i) social, (ii) economic and (iii) physical functions. Wilson (2012, p. 1223) argues that community resilience and vulnerability 'can be best conceptualized on the basis of how well the 'critical triangle' of economic, social and environmental capital is developed in a given community and how these capitals interact'.

In recent literature, resilience is regarded as a measure of the sustainability of a community (Magis, 2010). Resilience is first conceived at an individual level and, through the mobilization of social capital and community engagement, it leads to resilience at a group and community level (Leach, 2013). Resilience is therefore both *multi-dimensional* and *multi-scalar* (Steiner and Markantoni, 2014). Reviewing resilience literature, Skerratt (2013) introduced a spectrum ranging from 'reactive bounce-back' approaches through to 'proactive human agency'. Based on Wilson's model, we elaborate on the three aspects of this critical triangle and their links with place attachment.

### *Social resilience*

Many scholars see well-developed social capital as the key ingredient for resilient communities and an important indicator of social sustainability (Magis, 2010). Schwarz et al. (2011) stress that local participation and community self-support play critical roles in creating a viable social environment which can function as a foundation for community members to build resilience. A socially supportive environment helps to engage individuals and creates a community spirit on which resilience can be built. Change-oriented place attachment is often at the heart of community action and engagement with other community members (Brown et al., 2003; Norris et al., 2008), which can foster community resilience.

Social resilience also signifies the ability of individuals and communities to withstand external shocks to their social structure. Communities have their own local needs, resources, and experiences in dealing with different types of disruption. Magis (2010) states that the personal and collective engagement of the community members is essential to achieve social sustainability. Hegney et al. (2008) argue that resilience is the ability to learn from the past, to be open and inclusive and to have a sense of purpose. Furthermore, the presence of a charismatic leader with high 'emotional intelligence' boosts resilience in a community (Burns, 2010). Community resilience is generally perceived to promote greater wellbeing (Aked et al., 2010) by creating common objectives and encouraging community members to work together for the common good of their place.

### *Economic (personal) resilience*

Community resilience is often supported by a resilient local economy with diverse businesses, employment opportunities, and available local services (Steiner and Atterton, 2014). It depends not only on the volume of economic activities but, primarily, on their diversity (Magis, 2010). At the individual level, employment opportunities are not only an indicator of personal wellbeing, they also provide a reason for workers to stay in a village. The availability of shops, goods, and services is important for a village's self-reliance and contributes to village pride. Local services also play an important social role, as they become meeting points and places for daily casual interactions. Services can also provide local employment, which is beneficial to personal resilience (Woods, 2005; Haartsen and Van Wissen, 2012). Economic resilience is therefore closely related to place dependency and place attachment.

### *Environmental resilience*

Several scholars argue for more integration of place attachment and the role of place in resilience research. Hegney et al. (2007) mention several external factors which contribute to resilience, including a person's connection with the land, which can be understood as a sense of belonging to a specific locale. The feeling that 'I belong to this community' can enhance resilience and, in the words of McManus (2011, p. 3), 'belonging, in short, is a positive attribute of rural communities that contributes to resilience'. Contributing to that, personal resilience can be defined as 'an outcome of people's perceptions of the physical environment, their sense of belonging and job opportunities' (McManus et al., 2011, p. 9).

Through personal resilience people are more likely to relate to place attachment. This is mainly because place attachment can result in taking pride in the village and can enhance local community engagement. Community leaders are often those with a strong place attachment and local knowledge, including knowledge of history (Schwarz et al., 2011; Norris et al., 2008). Hegney et al. (2007) explored in rural Australia the factors which influence the development of resilience among individuals and distinguished the intrapersonal (e.g. being innovative and proactive, embracing differences, or being resourceful) and external factors (e.g. family, culture or being part of a rural community) which shape a person's ability to be resilient.



## Consequences of place attachment for resilience

As discussed above, the three aspects of place attachment have a direct link with community resilience. Social aspects of place attachment have an impact on social resilience and community actions. Environmental attachment is an essential ingredient in building social and economic relations and therefore often at the root of resilience building. A bond with the environment can also result in a sense of local pride, which helps in organising joint actions and therefore is useful for community resilience. Finally, the various aspects of personal attachment to place influence a person's wellbeing and personal capital. This in turn influences the person's willingness to be involved in community life and community actions.

## METHODOLOGY

The link between place attachment and community resilience was empirically tested in two remote rural villages in the Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland (Figure 3). This research builds on earlier research carried out by Steiner and Markantoni (2014), who conducted an extensive survey of 155 participants in six Dumfries and Galloway villages. Two villages were selected to participate in follow-up research, which included in-depth interviews and mental maps. This selection was based on three main criteria: (1) small rural communities with fewer than 500 inhabitants, (2) loss of key public services, and (3) communities not participating in LEADER or other major funding programmes (based on an analysis of previously funded programmes). The aim of this follow-up study was to explore the personal and environmental aspects of place-based resilience. The interviews were carried out shortly after the initial survey. An alternative research method using mental map drawing was used to pre-empt socially desirable answers.

In total, twenty-one interviews were conducted with residents using mental maps. Mental maps have been successfully applied in the field of environmental psychology as the method enables a deeper understanding of the people-place relationship. As Boğaç (2009, p. 271) puts it, 'since a mental map is based upon personal experience within an area and an individual's selective representation of their known world [...] it helps to better understand the direct experience of people and their settings with respect to their attachment'. Figure 1 shows an example of such mental map. The mental map provided the foundation and structure for the interview, which covered questions about places of personal importance and the reasons behind their importance. Asking about a person's personal relationship to a place reveals information on place attachment.

### INSERT FIGURE 1

Figure 1. Mental map of participant 2F

### *Participant characteristics*

Table 1 presents the statistics of participants from both villages from the overall survey (see also Steiner and Markantoni, 2014) and Table 2 presents the participant statistics from the follow-up interviews (1A to 1K for Village 1, 2A to 2J for Village 2). The interviewees were on average between fifty and sixty years of age, which is a representative sample of the population (National Records of Scotland, 2011).



INSERT TABLE 1

Table 1. Overview of villages and participants in overall survey

INSERT TABLE 2

Table 2. Characteristics of interview participants Village 1

INSERT TABLE 3

Table 3. Characteristics of interview participants Village 2

As length of residence may play a role in the development of place attachment, we categorized the participants as ‘local’ or ‘newcomer’. In this study, a local resident is a person who had lived more than twenty years of his/her life in the village. We use the term newcomer to classify an in-migrant who had come to the area less than twenty years ago. This distinction is based on the survey findings, in which a clear line could be distinguished at around twenty years of residence. Four participants were categorized as local in Village 1, compared to half of the Village 2 participants.

#### *Location and context*

Village 1 and Village 2 are both situated in Dumfries and Galloway, in south-west Scotland (Figure 2), and are classified as remote rural areas as there is no town with a population of 10,000 or more within thirty minutes (Skerratt *et al.*, 2012). Village 1 is a former mining village and Village 2 is a fishing community which also receives tourists because it is the southernmost point in Scotland.

INSERT FIGURE 2

Figure 2. Location of the research area

## RESULTS

### Place attachment aspects in relation to community resilience

#### *Social role of local services and community activities*

The interviews revealed that social place attachment results in resilience aspects such as organizing local activities, supporting each other, and a sense of community. In addition, economic resilience for some interviewees created strong place attachment, as their local job provided them not only with income but also with social contacts. In both villages, most (Village 1, five out of seven; Village 2, four out of five) newcomers used the skills and expertise they had gained elsewhere to contribute to the community. In return, these newcomers felt more socially attached to the village. A handyman in Village 2 (2D) said: 'I help people fixing up their boats and stuff. I've got friends around the village now because I helped them with their boats'. A newcomer who moved to Village 2 to take over a local business (2A) said, 'We're providing a service. Most of the villagers appreciate that. We are appreciated for being here. That makes me feel part of the community'.

Dependence on local services can also influence a person's health and wellbeing and impact his/her personal resilience. A resident in Village 1 (1F) explained that she might leave the village due to the current lack of health services: 'I am happy with my life here now. But when you get older here and as I live by myself, it might be hard. I might move to a place where there are more services'.

Over time, the changing community life has left some local residents anchored in the past. Until ten years before, respondent 1I had participated in community activities and organized local events. His mental map refers to the past, as the football ground and bowling green for example, had been closed fifteen years before. The respondent had many positive memories associated with the village, but regretted that the village had changed over the years. He had a strong stability-oriented place attachment (1I):

I've realized, living here all my life, that people come here because they love the village. And the first thing they want to do is change it. I don't like these internal politics. It bothers me, so I try not to get involved just for my own sake. It's not good for my health you see.

Locals displayed stability-oriented place attachment, as they wanted to keep things the way they were used to. 'The community stays in the past. People who have lived here all their life tend to stay where they are, they don't travel' (2B).

#### *Natural environment as foundation*

Attachment to the local environment is a basis for personal resilience, as the results illustrate. The natural environmental place aspects in both villages were evaluated highly by both locals and newcomers and were an important reason to live there. All newcomers (thirteen in total) emphasized the importance of natural and nature-rich surroundings. For newcomer 2F (Mental map, Figure 2), personal resilience rose directly as a result of the environmental aspects: 'I felt that I could heal here and that's what happened. I've never been so healthy in years. The pace of life is slower here than living in a big city or town. That certainly helps me'.

Furthermore, respondents wished to maintain the high quality of their natural surroundings and were concerned about the possible impacts of future developments in their villages (e.g. wind farm or harbour maintenance work).

Newcomers showed stability-oriented attachment to their environment, as their main reason for moving to and living in these villages was the peacefulness that village life offered. Five out of seven newcomers mentioned this as their primary reason for moving. As respondent 1B said: 'We wanted peace and quiet, put the clock back. And still have a community, like we knew from our time when growing up. We don't have many modern facilities here, but we're also not looking for it [stability-oriented]'.

#### *Village pride: Awareness of economic possibilities*

The respondents were also aware of possible threats confronting their village, such as the lack of local shops, unemployment, and the danger of youth out-migration. The few available remaining services in both villages (e.g. local shop, post office, and mining museum) were highly valued by most interviewees. Services were appreciated mainly for the social function they provided, but also for the village's development opportunities (on sixteen out of the twenty-one mental maps).

For the coastal community (Village 2), the harbour was important and the respondents indicated that it was not well maintained. A newcomer who owned a bed & breakfast (2D) expressed his concerns about the unattractiveness of the harbour and the impact it could have on local tourism: 'my B&B guests all mention they really like the boats and everything that comes with a harbour. But now it's not attractive at all for tourists. It looks horrible; I really wish they'd do something about it. It has potential'.

This shared concern of the Village 2 residents (mentioned in all ten interviews) brought people together, which resulted in the establishment of a development committee for the harbour. Working towards common goals and acting together to create opportunities is an indicator of community resilience and demonstrates the change-oriented attitude of the local population.

For Village 1, the main service still running was its mining museum, which was also its main employer and tourist attraction. The museum is part of the village's and people's identity, since locals recall the mining age and the time when they were involved in the construction of the museum. Looking into the future, both locals and newcomers (nine of the eleven interviewees) expressed their concerns about the current management. Respondent 1B said: 'I worked as a tour guide for the museum until last year. It helped us to get involved in the village. It's an important spot for the village. It's just really sad that the museum is managed so badly now, it needs more involvement with the villagers'.

The museum could also help newcomers learn about the history of the village and create a shared interest in the village history. Both newcomers and locals cared about maintaining the museum as it was important for village pride, but their approaches were different. Locals demonstrated a stability-oriented attitude, wanting to protect the local history, whereas newcomers were prone to a more change-oriented attitude, suggesting that the museum could provide more activities and that this could lead to more visitors for the village.

### **Implications of change- and stability-oriented behaviour for community resilience**

#### *Community heterogeneity*

The heterogeneity of the communities was seen as one of the main reasons for a lack of community participation: 'There are too many different groups. The few people who want to do something for the community are too spread out. If the groups were smaller and more concentrated, more could be achieved' (2E).

Community members who wanted to change things in the village and had ideas for improvements did not always find support, as 1K exemplifies: ‘There are divided ideas about changing the bowling green into allotments, I think that would improve things. Some people want to improve things, but they don’t get a lot of support’.

The bowling green held many memories for those residents who knew it when it was flourishing, so they were sad to see those memories being taken away (stability-oriented). Newcomers, who did not have a historic bond with the abandoned bowling green, saw possibilities for new activities to brighten up the village (change-oriented).

### *Divided ideas: newcomers versus locals*

Change-oriented local residents regretted that newcomers were not actively involved in village life. Other locals were more critical of the attitudes of new people, as they did not believe that newcomers wanted to integrate with and contribute to the community (Village 1 three out of four locals, Village 2 three out of five locals).

Due to cultural differences between newcomers and locals, newcomers did not seem to fully integrate with the locals, and instead formed their own separate community. However, the efforts of newcomers who did want to contribute to community wellbeing did not always result in appreciation from the rest of the community. As the above quote from 1I stresses ‘the first thing they want to do is change it’. A newcomer (1C) who acted as an advisor on a museum renewal project said that the project did not strengthen his attachment to the whole community: ‘We feel not that much part of the village, because we are not from here’. Another newcomer (1F) also experienced feelings of ‘not being part of the community’, as the locals did not appreciate a newcomer having a local job. ‘We moved into the house and I started the job the next day. They weren’t very happy about it.’

The above quotes illustrate the different needs of rural residents and their perceptions of possible changes. Newcomers greatly valued the environmental place aspects and wanted to maintain the natural surroundings. On the other hand, they showed change-oriented behaviour towards the social and economic aspects of their place. This differs from most local residents, who wanted to maintain their current social and economic lifestyle. This division between locals and newcomers is not straightforward, as both groups showed both stability-oriented and change-oriented behaviour.

### *Can change- and stability-oriented behaviour occur in the same person?*

The interviews revealed a tension between the different perceptions of the future and sustainability of the villages. Interviewees acknowledged the impact of these conflicting perceptions on community wellbeing. A respondent (1I) explained: ‘People can be protective of what they have. But people are also proud and want to improve things.’ An explanation for this can be found in the distinction between change-oriented and stability-oriented place attachment, both of which can occur within the same person. This distinction within place attachment can be linked to resilience, as resilience is not considered a steady state, but varies over an individual’s lifetime (Hegney et al., 2007).

Change-oriented place attachment is positively connected to individual resilience. Newcomers are often socially and economically independent, resilient individuals, who are mobile and not dependent on local resources. However, their individual resilience does not necessarily add to community resilience. Newcomers are most closely attached to the environmental aspects of place, as Bijker and Haartsen (2012) also indicated. Because in-migrants choose their place of residence explicitly for the nature-rich environmental features,

this could arguably be a reason for moving out when their environmental attachment to place is disrupted, for example due to drastic landscape changes.

Stability-oriented people tend to have a nostalgic memory of the past. This can result in low individual resilience, which may not be beneficial to community resilience. Therefore, the duration of residence is not a direct condition for community resilience.

In contrast, several locals used their extensive local knowledge to keep community activities alive. These active locals were rooted in village life, had a good network and extensive local historical knowledge. In both villages, the active locals were perceived as 'natural' community leaders and played an important role in creating community participation and community resilience. These rooted leaders displayed both change-oriented and stability-oriented place attachment behaviour.

Figure 3 shows an overview of the results of both change- and stability-oriented place attachment and their implications for community resilience. The figure illustrates that both change- and stability-oriented place attachment can have positive implications (highlighted box) for community resilience. However, change-oriented place attachment can be seen as a threat to community life or its effects are limited to a person's personal resilience. Stability-oriented place attachment can also result in negative emotions towards the community.

#### INSERT FIGURE 3

Figure 3. Implications of place attachment for community resilience

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The emotional bond between people and place is complex, but it is highly significant in people's attitudes and behaviour in relation to the sustainable future of their communities. Even though several scholars have already emphasized this emotional people-place bond, the effects of place attachment on resilience have not yet been researched in depth. In this study we argue that rural community resilience is influenced by place attachment and therefore the people-place relationship should be included in research, policy and community intervention programmes on resilience for the creation of sustainable and adaptive communities. We also argue that resilience can have both a change-oriented and a stability-oriented component, as both types of community action can be beneficial to the rural community. Although this case study examined a small geographical region, we hope it constitutes a foundation for further research.

As the wellbeing of rural communities is currently under pressure, a good understanding of the potential strengths and weaknesses of resilience aspects is of utmost importance for research on and work with rural communities. In-depth investigation of resilience can offer a holistic approach to measuring the sustainability of a community (Wilson, 2012) and specifically the people-place relationship can be regarded as an integral component (Boğaç, 2009). The analysis of this study suggests that place attachment needs to be included when measuring resilience to provide a more complete picture of community dynamics. Place attachment can help illustrate the reality of community life, the different identities, histories and future aspirations (Gilchrist, 2009) which can in turn reveal the different community needs. In policy terms it means that revealing the local context can show the extent to which communities are capable of embracing current policy suggestions or demands (Steiner, 2016).

The conclusions of this work are of wider relevance. It reinforces the idea that the change- and stability-oriented paradox within place attachment is at the heart of the complex

relationship between people and place as well as the complex relationship between local residents and newcomers (Lewicka, 2011). Locals and newcomers have different types of place attachment, and both can strengthen or weaken community resilience. Newcomers showed change-oriented behaviour with respect to the social and economic place aspects, but stability-oriented behaviour with respect to the natural environment. For local residents it was the other way around. However, the active locals who tried to keep community activities alive had a keen eye for both change- and stability-oriented requirements.

In the researched villages, length of residence was not shown to be a factor in enhancing resilience. This is in line with findings from other research (Brown & Raymond, 2007; Savage et al., 2005). In fact, stability-oriented place attachment occurred mostly among long-term residents, who were more likely to have a nostalgic image of the village that was (see Komp and Johansson, 2015). Stability-oriented attachment leads to a desire to preserve the current features of the community, whereas resilience often relates to adapting to change. Preservation and improvement are outcomes of the different orientations people have towards place attachment.

Wellbeing is often argued to be higher in areas where people have a strong place attachment and take an active role in influencing local circumstances (Hothi et al., 2008). Especially in times of public withdrawal where communities will need to do more for themselves, community resilience becomes a useful tool of transferring responsibilities (Steiner and Markantoni, 2014). Including the people-place bond and the effects of place attachment on resilience can assist policy makers to understand the complexity of community resilience and improve the design and target support for community actions.

The diversity of reasons behind and expressions of place attachment will be valuable information for those interested in measuring and understanding community resilience in policy, practice and academia. In our research, the division between groups and interests was regarded as the main reason for the lack of participation in the community and in shared activities. This study suggests that a shared appreciation for the natural environment and local history could provide common ground to increase social interactions, stimulate meaningful involvement with local issues and strengthen cohesion among community members. With this paper we hope to invite researchers to engage in this challenging endeavour.

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